

King's Ransom

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Summary: Scar and Hago team up, Nala is kidnapped, and Simba is the only one who can save her!

***Chapter 1*: Chapter 1: I'll Always Take Care of You**

AN: Time for an evil team-up, I think. Things are gonna get nasty...

King's Ransom

Chapter One: I'll Always Take Care of You

"Just how do we end up in these situations?" Nala complained.

She and Simba had found themselves once again in trouble. Of course Nala blamed Simba entirely for all of this. It was his idea, his plan, his scheme. It was one hundred per cent his fault. She had nothing to do with it. She only suggested it to him.

Simba muttered something that Nala couldn't quite understand. She figured this was because of the fact he had a vine in his mouth at that moment.

They were both hanging in mid-air, dangling high above the huge gorge in the middle of the Pride Lands. Since they had such a thirst for adventure, the two cubs had decided to try and swing from a vine from one edge of the gorge to the other.

Needless to say, this didn't quite work out how they had planned it. The vine wasn't nearly long enough for the two of them to cross the entirety of the gorge, and they ended up stuck high in the air. Simba was biting on the vine to keep himself on, while Nala had her claws gripped tightly around Simba's tail.

This was putting enormous pressure on Simba. Not only did he have to keep himself from falling to his death, but he also had to keep Nala from falling to her death. *And* his tail felt like it was about to be ripped off completely. Great.

"Any plans?" Nala asked hopefully, looking up at him.

Simba managed to shake his head, and muttered something along the lines of "We're pretty much dead."

"Thought so," agreed Nala, looking down at the drop below. The fall would kill them. They'd become part of the great Circle of Life way sooner than they wanted to...

Simba – realising they were most likely going to die – decided to tell Nala something. "Nala, before we die, I just wanted to say I—"

Suddenly, the vine snapped, and Simba and Nala screamed as they fell to the ground – and to their deaths. The two cubs closed their eyes, not wanting to witness any part of their ugly, gruesome fate. They thought of everything that they would miss – their parents, their favourite places to go... *each other*.

The last thing the two of them heard before they died was a loud *splash!* Only, they weren't dead, they realised, once they came to their senses.

"Hey!" Simba exclaimed happily, once he realised what had saved them. "We're alive!"

Nala looked around, relieved that they weren't dead. "Yeah! We're alive!"

On instinct, the two friends hugged each other tightly. They weren't dead! What a relief! They didn't think they'd ever had a more terrifying ordeal before!

What had saved them? A teeny, tiny little pool in the ground, just deep enough for the water to cushion their fall and save their lives. It was a miracle...

After a few seconds had passed, Simba noticed Nala was still hugging her, her eyes shut tight. "Uh, Nala... you can stop hugging me now."

"Oh," Nala said, realising she had been hanging on to her best friend for a little *too* long. "Sorry," she said, laughing embarrassedly.

Simba clambered out of the pool and shook himself dry. He reached out a paw to Nala, and helped her out.

"Thanks," she told him, flashing him a warm smile.

"No problem," Simba told her.

"By the way, Simba, what did you want to say to me when we were about to fall?" Nala asked, curious.

Simba suddenly looked very nervous. "Oh... Nothing."

"You sure?" Nala asked.

Simba nodded, looking shyly away from Nala. "Yeah, I'm sure."

Hmm... Nala thought, putting a paw to her chin thoughtfully. What's got him so nervous? She shrugged. Oh well, that's Simba all over. You can never figure him out.

"Uh..." Nala cleared her throat. "I just wanted to say... err, thanks."

Simba looked a little confused. "Thanks for what?"

"For hanging on," Nala explained. "It must have taken a lot of... uh, strength. You know. You must have really cared about me to hang on for that long."

Simba blushed beneath his fur. "I... I guess I do. You are my best friend, after all. I'll always take care of you."

Things like that made Nala's heart warm up. There was a certain sense of... care between the two cubs. Their friendship was stronger than that of any other cubs in the pride. They were inseparable, it would seem. Both of them knew that.

Simba walked closer to Nala, and they stared into each other's eyes. "No matter what, we'll always be friends, right?"

Nala smiled, and nodded. "Yeah. No matter what."

Simba glanced up at the sky. It was getting late, and the sky had turned a beautiful red, not a cloud in sight. It was really something. The weather was always like this in the Pride Lands. You got exactly the right amount of sun and exactly the right amount of rain. The weather was perfect.

Unfortunately, for cubs like Simba and Nala, they hardly had time to enjoy the night, as dictated by their parents. "Always in by sundown," they said. "It's not healthy for cubs your age to stay out this late," they said.

Well, that latter statement was completely wrong. Both Simba and Nala had heard the rest of the cubs in the pride up far later than the time they had to go to sleep. Was that fair? They certainly didn't think so. What did they do to deserve this?

Simba groaned when he realised they had to go in. "Great. Time to go to sleep. *Again.*"

Nala rolled her eyes. "I knew you were gonna say that. We never should have wasted our time trying to swing over the stupid gorge."

Simba nodded. "Yeah. Oh well, there's always tomorrow."

"I guess so," Nala agreed, kind of seeing his point. Every day for the two friends was different. They were always off doing different things every day. Unlike the other cubs, who would just make the same jokes, talk about the same things and practically bore themselves to death every day. It was a relief Simba and Nala were completely different from them.

"Come on," said Simba, walking away. He looked back at her, and wagged his back. "I'll give you a piggyback ride."

Nala giggled, and clambered onto his back. "Thanks. Uh... Why are you giving me a piggyback ride, though?"

"You're probably tired from that fall," he told her. "I said I'd always take care of you, didn't I?"

Nala smiled warmly at him. "Yeah. Just don't expect me to give you one tomorrow."

Simba laughed, and started making his way home. He'd try to make the journey back as slow as possible, desperate to stay up for as long as he could.

Chapter 2: Chapter 2: Just a Friend

Chapter Two: Just a Friend

One of the things Simba and Nala sometimes dreaded about going home too early was that occasionally they had to pass through the water hole, which is where the other cubs usually hung around until gone dark. They were so lucky...

"Hey, Simba, you call *that* a girlfriend?" one of the cubs spat as they walked by.

"Shut up!" both Simba and Nala snapped towards the cub at the same time. They were used to it by now. *Too* used to it. The two friends often joked about how when Simba was King, he'd have them all chased out of the pride, never to return. Revenge best served hot.

One of the other cubs chimed in. "What are you, attached to each other now?"

"That's what happens when you're so in *love*," a female cub joined in.

Simba and Nala simply ignored them, their heads held high. They were too good for this kind of abuse. They weren't going to let it get to them. Never had, never would.

After all, there were more important things to worry about.

Scar angrily stormed around the Outlands, searching for his 'top hyenas': Shenzi, Banzai and Ed. That was a big understatement, though. They just happened to be the *least* stupidest of all of his slaves. Plus they were certainly a step upwards from the last nuisance Scar had to deal with, an annoying little fan of Scar that went by the name of Mtumwa, or 'Tummy' as he liked to annoyingly call himself. *Anyone* was better than him.

Scar had felt himself rapidly declining in the past few days. Everything seemed that little bit worse – worse than it already was for him, that it. Everything felt so useless these days. No matter what Scar did, he could never take over the Pride Lands. It was the one thing he yearned for – was it so hard to take over one lousy kingdom?

But good help was hard to find these days. Scar of all people knew that. If only there was another genius around somewhere. Someone like him. Someone with the same wit and cunning and... well, *evil*.

Instead, he had to deal with the ridiculous stupidity of his hyena minions. Even they proved to be useless. Every task he gave them always ended in a miserable failure, and this only succeeded in making Scar more miserable. Misery, misery, misery. That's all he received. All Scar had *ever* received.

"Hey, it's Scar!" a voice cried.

Scar sighed and turned around to see Shenzi, Banzai and Ed approach him. Immediately he could tell from the look in their eyes that they wanted food from him. Well, he didn't have any, so they could starve for all he cared.

"So, Scar, old buddy, old pal of mine," said Banzai. "Do you happen to have any food by any chance, huh, Scar, huh?"

"Not today," Scar grumbled.

Shenzi noticed Scar looked a little... miserable today. At least, more miserable than usual. "Hey, Scar, you look a little bit sad. What's up?"

Scar glared at them furiously. "*Sad?*" he roared. "*I never get sad!*"

"Well, you look sad to me," Shenzi muttered.

Banzai nodded. "Yeah. Feeling a little down in the dumps, Scar?"

Scar closed his eyes and sighed deeply. "The kingdom is becoming increasingly hard to overtake."

"Like always?" said Banzai.

"You're not making me feel any better, you know," Scar informed Banzai.

"Oh." He laughed. "Oops."

"As I was saying, I have the sickening feeling that I'm going to need..." The word choked in his throat for a second. "*Help...*"

if I am to succeed in crowning myself King.

"Help?" exclaimed Shenzi. "I thought *we* were your help."

Scar couldn't help but laugh. "*You?* You can hardly be considered help. You're all slaves. Nothing more. I need some kind of assistant, someone I can plot with easily."

"Did someone say my name?" a voice called from behind them all.

Scar swiftly turned around to see a strange lion wielding a staff with a cobra-like head. "Who are you?" Scar demanded.

The lion smiled. "Just a friend," he replied. "But you can call me... Hago."

Scar quickly grabbed Hago by the throat. "How did you find us here?"

"Now if I talked, what would keep you from slaying me O Evil One?" Hago replied. He gestured towards the scar on Scar's face. "By the way, that's never gonna heal if you don't stop picking."

"What do you want?" Scar demanded angrily. "Who sent you?"

"I sent me," Hago replied. He glanced around. "I see there hasn't been much in the line of decoration here," he commented, seeing how barren the Outlands looked. "But I'm sure it can be brought up to code with a little bit of magic."

"What are you talking about?" Scar asked, thinking he had yet *another* creepy psycho with brain damage to deal with. Was there a whole club devoted to them or something?

Hago sighed. Surely Scar was intelligent – couldn't he tell he was a magical wizard who sought control of the Pride Lands?

"Look," Hago began, taking a deep breath. "I am Hago, the greatest wizard in all the world. I want to take over the Pride Lands, and enslave the entire population. Understand?"

Instantly, Scar's eyes glinted with curiosity. He could now see *enormous* potential in Hago. A wizard? Who wanted to control the Pride Lands? Wanted to enslave the population? Scar liked him already! This was the type of scheming madman who Scar was looking for all along.

Scar put his paw around Hago's shoulder. "Why didn't you say so? I've been expecting you."

"Sorry? Expecting me?" said Hago, raising an eyebrow. "No one expects me. I came to find you."

Scar looked surprised. "Oh, really? Why would you be looking for me?"

"Because Scar, I know you. You're a power-hungry maniac with anger problems who wants control of the Pride Lands."

"*Anger problems?*" Scar roared furiously. "*I have no anger problems!*"

Hago smiled. "Right," he said, nodding.

"This guy's good," Banzai whispered to Shenzi, watching this interesting spectacle.

"Give me one good reason why I shouldn't tear you apart right now!" Scar threatened.

Hago seemed completely unaffected by Scar's threats and yells. This was different to the hyenas, who cowered in fear when Scar raised his voice. Hago however, just stood there, smiling.

"Because today I was thinking, 'Hey, maybe I should try and get some help to take over the kingdom I so much adore,' so I decided to find you. With my brains and your... *evil*, we could be unstoppable."

"I'm listening," Scar said. Things were looking up...

AN: Scar and Hago... working together? This can't be good. In fact, it's a complete disaster. How will their evil plot go? There's only one way to find out, so come back tomorrow! Or else I'll... sit here and do nothing. Yeah!

Chapter 3: Chapter 3: An Evil Duo

AN: Two more of those chapters, packed with all the delightful story goodness you deserve!

Chapter Three: An Evil Duo

"I have a few ideas on how we could enslave the Pride Lands," Hago told Scar. "All of them quite..." He chuckled. "*Disturbing.*"

Scar chuckled along with him. He liked Hago. Scar could sense he had the same amount of evil and hate inside of him, making him the perfect candidate to become his partner in evil. Hago had power, and Scar knew he could find a way to exploit this power, if it was done in the right way. He had a lot of plans for this evil lion...

"Well, go ahead," Scar urged. "What's your first plan?"

Hago laughed sinisterly. "Well... I was thinking we should put the Prince in the middle of the gorge nearby, and then tell him his father has a surprise for him, and to wait there. Then, your hyenas can cause a stampede of wildebeest that will be herded right into the gorge, thereby putting the Prince in quite some jeopardy. Then you can alert King Mufasa, send him into the gorge also, and kill them both in the stampede!" Hago laughed evilly.

Scar stared at Hago, wide-eyed by his explanation. After a few seconds, Scar burst out laughing, rolling about on the ground. "That has to be the *stupidest* idea I've ever heard!" he exclaimed through laughter. "Like *that* would ever work!"

Hago narrowed his eyes. "I can see you're not impressed. It doesn't matter anyway – there is a plan B."

Scar's laughter ceased, and he quickly became intrigued, rising up so he was staring Hago in the eyes. "A plan B, you say? How... good of you to plan ahead. Now tell me, what is this plan B?"

"I've faced the Prince and his troublesome little friend before," Hago answered, a look of pure hate burning in his eyes. "They ruined my plans for universal domination, and I was so *very* close to achieving my plan, too. They humiliated me, and I know just the way to make them pay."

"How?" Scar asked, listening with interest. The evil contained within Hago was so powerful Scar could almost feel the anger emanating from him. Evil at its best...

"The plan is quite simple. We stage a hostage situation," Hago answered, an evil smile slowly creeping across his face.

"A hostage situation?" Scar repeated, his eyes widened.

Hago nodded, his cruel smile still on his face. "We kidnap Prince Simba's little friend and simply wait for him to come to her rescue. Then we can kill them both, thereby putting quite an emotional dent in the King. This gives us quite the opportunity to then viciously murder King Mufasa, allowing us to enslave the entirety of the Pride Lands!"

Scar chuckled evilly. Hago's plan sounded like it would work. It sounded like it would work *perfectly*! Why didn't he think of it before? Hago and him could make a powerful force when working together. No one could stop the two of them! Everyone would cower before them, for all eternity!

"You're quite a smart lion," Scar told Hago.

Hago looked flattered. "I know of my brilliance. After all, I do have magical powers you know."

Banzai rolled his eyes. "Magical powers. Yeah, right."

"Yeah," Shenzi agreed, staring at Hago with doubt. "What a phoney!"

Hago noticed the hyenas were commenting on him. "What was that?"

Shenzi and Banzai looked at each other nervously, and laughed. "We were just saying how... *magical* you were."

Banzai nodded, smiling nervously. "Yeah. Magical, that's right."

"Fools!" Hago exclaimed, aiming his cobra staff at the two of them. Arcs of electricity shot out from the cobra eyes at the top of the staff and struck the two hyenas, electrocuting them both. Ed was laughing hysterically as Shenzi and Banzai screamed in pain.

Eventually the electrocution ceased, and Shenzi and Banzai collapsed to the ground, unconscious, their bodies smoking from the painful electrocution.

"Nice shot," said Scar, smiling.

"The key is not to pull the staff, but squeeze it," Hago told him.

"When should we strike?" Scar asked, eager to exact Hago's horrible plan. "I want the Pride Lands in my grasp as soon as possible!"

"Scar, you seem quite itchy to see my plan in action," Hago observed.

"Yes!" Scar admitted loudly. "Too long have I waited to enslave the miserable population of this pride! It's about time I had my revenge on my troublesome brother! Now that you're here I can see my dream is finally becoming true."

"Our dream," Hago corrected him.

Scar waved him away. "Yes, yes, I was getting to that."

"Well, I was going to suggest that we strike in the middle of the night. Take the cub when everybody is sleeping innocently. It's the perfect opportunity."

"Excellent thinking, Hago," Scar told him. "We shall strike tonight. Finally, the Pride Lands will be mine!"

The two of them laughed evilly, their cackles echoing into the night. An evil duo had been formed, and it looked like they were going to succeed in their sinister plot...

"Tired?" Nala asked Simba as she climbed off his back once they arrived in the den.

"Tired?" repeated Simba. "Me? Nah! I could stay up for hours!"

"You won't be, though," came the voice of Simba's mother, Sarabi, as she wandered over to the two cubs.

Simba rolled his eyes at his mother. "Aw, come on, Mom! All the other cubs stay up later than us! Why can't we?"

"Because, Simba, if you're going to be King then you need to go to sleep early if you want to be stronger in the morning."

Simba frowned. Typical Mom answer. He had a feeling complaining would be pretty useless. His dad was always up late sorting out everything in the kingdom, and he sure doubted that his dad went to sleep early when he was Simba's age, either. It really wasn't fair!

"Can't we just stay up a *little* later?" Simba begged his mother.

"No, Simba, it's far too—"

Simba and Nala both flashed cheesy grins at Sarabi. "Please!"

Sarabi sighed at the two cubs, and decided – for once – to give in to the cubs' demands. "Okay," she agreed. "But *only* if you stay in the den."

"All right!" the two cubs exclaimed together, happy. They bounded further into the den to enjoy their extended freedom.

Five Minutes Later...

"... Well, I let them stay up for a little longer," Sarabi told Sarafina as they walked through the den, "and five minutes later I found them like this."

Sarabi pointed to an area in the corner of the den. Simba and Nala had both fallen fast asleep. Nala had collapsed on top of Simba, and was snuggled up to him, a smile on her face.

Sarabi and Sarafina both shared a glance at each other. "Aw..." Sarafina said. "That's adorable!"

Sarabi chuckled. "It is, isn't it?"

"Sarabi... why don't we leave them?" Sarafina asked. "Just for the night? I'd love to see the look on their faces when they wake up."

Sarabi smiled. "Yeah. Let's leave them. I don't think they'll mind one bit."

The two friends laughed together, and left the two sleeping cubs to themselves. They stayed that way for hours...

Well, until something – or *someone* – grabbed Nala and carried her out of the den...

Chapter 4: Chapter 4: Kidnapped!

Chapter Four: Kidnapped!

Simba's eyes flickered open the next morning. He felt really... good today. That must have been the best sleep he'd ever had! He couldn't exactly figure out why, though. It felt like there was someone... with him while he was sleeping. It was kind of strange, but it was nice. Really, really nice.

And that's when he remembered just exactly *how* he had ended up like this. "Whoa!" he exclaimed aloud. "I fell asleep by Nala," he whispered to himself quietly. He looked around, and then realised Nala was no longer near him.

Now this struck Simba as quite odd, because the first thing Nala would do when she woke up would be to wake up Simba. So just where had she got to? Simba wanted to find out, and fast.

He got to his paws and walked through the den, keeping an eye out for her. *I bet this is just a trick she's playing on me, Simba thought suspiciously. She's just looking for another chance to pin me. Yeah... Well I'll pin you first, Nala!*

Walking over to the den opening, Simba could see his father, his mother and Nala's mother huddled around each other, talking to each other about something that made his blood run cold.

"... We've looked everywhere!" Sarafina exclaimed. "I don't know where she could be!"

Sarabi had a comforting paw around Sarafina's shoulder. "Don't worry. I'm sure we can find her."

Mufasa nodded in agreement. "She can't have gone too far. Do you know why Nala would just run away?"

Sarafina shook her head. "Nala would *never* run away from anything. I think..." She hesitated for a moment, before deciding to blurt out her worst fear. "I think someone might have taken her."

"Why would someone want to take her?" Sarabi asked, curious.

Sarafina shrugged. "I—I don't know," she replied. "I just have... I just have this feeling, that's all. I don't understand it."

"She'll have to turn up somewhere," Mufasa assured the worried mother. "I'll make sure the whole pride searches for her."

"What's going on?" Simba asked, causing the three lions to turn around and stare directly at Simba. Now Simba had a very good idea about what had happened, but he decided to get a decent explanation first.

Mufasa sighed at his son. He had to handle this carefully. Mufasa knew how attached Simba was to Nala. This was going to be difficult...

"Son..." Mufasa began. "I'm afraid Nala has gone missing."

Simba let out a little gasp. His worst fears had come true. He *knew* something was up as soon as he saw Nala had gone without waking him up first.

"How?" Simba asked, wanting to know as much as possible.

Mufasa shook his head. "I don't know, Simba. But we're looking for her. I'm sure we'll find her soon enough."

And then Simba suddenly felt a little something tug at his heart. Was that... loneliness? He suddenly had the biggest sense of loss he'd had in a long time. Nala was... gone? How? Why? Who? So many questions with no answers. This was bad. This was really, *really* bad.

Since Simba knew Nala so well, being the best of friends and all, he knew that Nala hadn't run away. She would never do that. It wasn't in her personality. The only other logical reason was that someone had taken her. Kidnapped her! But who would do that? Who...?

"I have to go look for her," Simba declared, making his way out of the den, before Mufasa stopped him.

"No, Simba," he told his son firmly. "I don't want you going missing, too."

"Dad, you *have* to let me—"

"No," Mufasa interrupted. "If someone has taken Nala, then they might start taking other cubs, too. Do you want to go

missing, too?"

"I would if it'd help me find Nala," Simba replied honestly.

He knew deep inside that he just *had* to find her. He promised he'd take care of her! He *promised*! What would Nala think of him if she knew Simba was just sitting inside the den while she was tortured mercilessly by whoever had kidnapped her? She'd *loathe* him!

He felt it was his duty to protect her. He wasn't going to let her get hurt. Not now, not ever. He'd do whatever it took to make sure she was safe, even if it meant him dying instead of her! That's what best friends did for each other, wasn't it? They took care of each other. They wouldn't let each other get hurt.

"Simba, you need to let us take care of this," Mufasa told Simba. "You're too young to go off by yourself."

"But I need to find her!" Simba argued angrily. "Don't you understand?"

"Simba, you're staying here. And that's that."

Simba growled angrily, storming off back into the den. He decided to turn to say one more thing. "If it turns out Nala's dead tomorrow, then I know whose fault it is." And with that, he disappeared, leaving Mufasa, Sarabi and Sarafina all stunned. They just stood there, silent, not even moving a muscle.

Sarabi finally managed to break the silence. "I've... I've never seen Simba act like that before," she said, pretty shocked. She just didn't expect a reaction like that from someone like him.

"He cares a lot about Nala," Sarafina explained. "Maybe more than we know. Maybe more than we'll ever know."

Mufasa thought for a moment. "Maybe he'll come to his senses soon enough. If it turns out someone *has* taken Nala then I don't want him out alone."

"I'm still trying to think who could have taken her," said Sarafina worriedly. "What monster would possibly want to kidnap a defenceless little cub?"

"Yes!" Hago exclaimed. "I am such a monster for taking a defenceless little cub!"

Nala lay on the ground in the middle of the Pride Lands, surrounded in a circle by Scar, Hago and several hyenas, all of whom looked *very* hungry. She'd woken up here, and found herself terrified instantly. She had no idea the Outlands were *this* scary. But now she knew, and she wasn't soon to forget it.

"Looks like your plan worked, Hago," Scar told the villainous lion. "I must say I'm impressed. I'm actually surprised I've never heard of you before."

"I like to keep a low profile," Hago informed him.

"What do you want?" Nala demanded from the two villains.

"Oh, only the complete annihilation of the Prince, King and Queen," Hago replied. "And the way things are going, it seems like me and my new buddy Scar here will accomplish that goal with ease."

Nala gasped when she realised that Simba's Uncle was in on this. She knew he was a creepy, distant guy, but she *never* thought he'd be capable of evil on this scale. So *this* was what he had been doing all the time. Coming up with new schemes to try and take over the Pride Lands. It was shocking, to say the least.

"So why do you need me?" Nala asked, always the inquisitive one.

"My dear girl, I don't think you quite realise the gravity of your situation," Scar replied. "We're holding you hostage."

"So?" Nala spat. "Simba will come for me."

Scar and Hago looked at each other, evil grins spreading across their faces. Hago whispered in Nala's ear.

"I'm counting on it," he whispered menacingly. Hago rose, an evil grin on his face. "Ooh, I'm so evil! I just gave myself chills! Even my goose bumps have goose bumps!" Hago laughed evilly. "I'm a bad boy!"

The evil laughter continued, and Nala began to wonder if she would live through this.

AN: Things are looking bad for both Simba and Nala. What could happen next? You'll have to find out tomorrow, won't you? Slip a review under my door if you're not too busy.

Chapter 5: Chapter 5: To the Rescue!

AN: I'm ready to crack on with some more chapters! And I guess you're ready to read them! So here you are!

Chapter Five: To the Rescue!

Simba sat in the corner of the den, curled up, a miserable look on his face. He was upset, and anyone who caught the slightest glimpse of him would know that.

And to think the day had started so great for him. But here he was, ten minutes later, feeling more upset than he ever had been. He wiped a few tears from his eyes, thinking he was never going to see Nala ever again.

Nala was gone, and there really wasn't anything he could do about it. Why had she disappeared all of a sudden? Simba knew someone must have taken her – why else would she disappear?

The *real* question was this: just *who* had taken her? Simba had thought about it, and really could only come up with one logical conclusion...

Hago. Hago had taken her. It kind of made sense when he thought about it carefully. Simba and Nala had wrecked his plans, and this was Hago's idea of revenge. He'd kidnapped Nala out of revenge. Hago was the type of lion who would do such a cruel thing. Who knew what he could be doing to Nala right now? All those weird powers of his... He could be torturing her without mercy, inflicting the most horrible pain on her... She could be *dying*.

And that's when Simba realised that he *had* to do something. The thought struck him that Nala could be dead in a matter of hours if someone didn't find her and save her. But who could save her? Clearly the pride weren't getting any closer to locating her, so what could be done?

Simba knew what the rest of the pride didn't. He had this feeling deep down that Nala was closer than anyone expected. The creepiest place around here by far was the Outlands. Evil, hungry hyenas roamed the place, and they would do just *anything* for the slightest scrap of food...

What if Hago had made a deal with the hyenas, and now they were working together? It wasn't beyond Hago's boundaries, that was for sure. During Simba's encounter with Hago, he had seen just how menacing and cruel he had been. He froze Nala! That was enough proof, wasn't it?

Maybe Simba could tell his parents... Yeah, that was a good idea. Maybe then they would do something about it, and start looking for Hago, too. After all, how could anyone miss him? The insane, evil look in his eyes, his slick body, the abnormal cobra staff... It all practically *screamed*, "Find me!"

Simba had made his mind up. He'd explain all about Hago, and how he thought that he had kidnapped Nala. They'd have to believe him! They just *had* to! Why wouldn't they?

Simba wiped a few more tears from his eyes, and hopped to his paws, a little bit of hope instilled inside of him.

Mufasa, Sarabi and Sarafina were still stood by the den opening, talking worriedly. Sarafina seemed even more distressed now, and it came as no surprise to Simba. After all, her daughter had suddenly disappeared without warning or reason – wouldn't you be worried too?

"Dad, I need to tell you something," Simba said urgently, interrupting their conversation.

"Simba, what is it?" Mufasa asked, instantly detecting the urgency in his son's voice. It sounded like he had something really important to say.

"I think I know who's taken Nala!" Simba declared.

Mufasa was a little confused by this. How could Simba possibly know who had kidnapped Nala? It seemed... odd, the King had to admit. However, maybe there was something in the past Simba knew that might have led to Nala's kidnapping somehow. Something he didn't quite want to admit to earlier...

"Who?" Mufasa asked his son, hoping that Simba really *did* know something and wasn't just making it up.

"Okay, remember a while ago when we said a few hyenas kidnapped us?" Simba asked his father.

Mufasa nodded. "I remember."

"Good. Well, we weren't actually kidnapped by hyenas," he explained quickly, hoping his parents wouldn't pick out the fact that he had lied to them. Again. "We actually went to the jungle and—"

"You went into the jungle?" Sarabi interrupted, an angry look on her face. "Simba, you know you're not supposed to leave the Pride Lands!"

"Yeah, but this is really important—"

"Do you *know* how worried we were about you when you told us that you were taken by hyenas?" his mother continued on, ignoring the fact that Simba had something really important to say. "You just lied to us to cover yourselves up!"

"Mom, that's not important right now—"

"Your mother's right, Simba," Mufasa said sternly, cutting off Simba for the second time. "You know it's wrong to lie."

"But—"

"Enough, Simba," Sarabi interrupted yet again. "If you're just going to continue to lie to us then we're not going to listen to you."

Simba groaned loudly. "Why won't anybody *listen to me*?" he roared loudly, his voice echoing throughout the empty den.

That seemed to shut his parents up. Their mouths were wide open, shocked by Simba's sudden outburst.

"I'm trying to tell you something important and you just keep ignoring me!" Simba complained loudly, getting angrier by the second. "I'm trying to tell you who kidnapped Nala, but *no*, you're too busy thinking about how wrong it was to lie to you! Don't you care? Don't you care *at all*?"

"Listen, Simba—" Mufasa began to say, before he was cut off by Simba.

"No, *you* listen!" Simba cried angrily. "I'm not even going to tell you now! I'll take care of this all by myself!"

Simba stormed out of the den. "Simba," Mufasa began in a warning tone, "if you leave the den you'll be stuck in here for a month."

Simba glared back. "What's new?" he spat, before sprinting away, off on his own adventure.

He was going to take care of this. He knew he could. If no one else was going to help him, there he was just going to have to do it himself. He'd rescue Nala, stop Hago and anyone else who threatened them.

Or he would die trying.

Chapter 6: Chapter 6: Searching for Nala

Chapter Six: Searching for Nala

Hago was smiling evilly as he and Scar sat near the border that separated the Pride Lands from the Outlands, awaiting for Simba arrive to 'rescue' Nala.

There was no way they were going to let that happen, though.

"He'll be along any minute," said Hago excitedly. "The plan cannot possibly fail!"

"And soon the Pride Lands will be ours," Scar added, laughing sinisterly, "and there won't be anyone left to oppose us."

"You won't win," said a voice from behind them.

Scar and Hago turned around to see Nala, who had quite a confident smile on her face. The two villains looked at each other, their eyebrows raised. They then looked at Nala, frowning.

"Oh, really?" said Scar, doubt in his mind. "And why do you think that, you inept little cub?"

"Like I said, Simba will be along to rescue me any minute, and I'm sure he'll have no problem taking care of you two."

Scar and Hago laughed, thinking the idea of Simba beating them was outrageous. Nala still had the confident smile on her face.

"Fine, laugh if you want," Nala told them. "But Simba's managed to beat you before, so I don't see why he can't do it again."

"There's a *slight* difference this time," Hago informed her. "You may have been able to outdo me on my own once before. But now I have a power-hungry genius, *and* an army of hyenas by my side. Now, you silly girl, how do you think one cub can stop that many of us?"

Nala said nothing. Hago smiled, thinking this was conclusive.

"I thought so," Hago said, satisfied he had made his point. "Now shut up, because if you talk again I'll cut off your legs."

Nala gulped. The way Hago said that made her believe he would actually *do* such a despicable thing. It wasn't beyond his boundaries, that was for sure. That is, if he even *had* any boundaries.

"Hago, what exactly is the procedure for when the little brat gets here?" Scar asked his accomplice.

"It's simple, Scar," Hago replied simply. He pointed at Nala. "We stick her in an empty area, hide somewhere and wait for the Prince to arrive. Then once he arrives, we just need to jump right out at him and kill the two of them. It really couldn't be simpler."

"Hmm..." Scar said thoughtfully. "Good plan, but what if we made it a little more... *interesting*?" Scar asked, an evil look in his eyes.

"Interesting, eh?" Hago repeated, liking where Scar was going with this.

"It's not really fair that we're going to kill them straight away, is it?" said Scar, smirking sinisterly. "That's more like a mercy killing. What we *should* do is capture them both and give them a slow, painful, *agonising* death. They deserve it for putting us through so much discomfort. Don't you agree?"

Hago chuckled. "What a... *delicious* idea, Scar. I like the way you think."

"Likewise," said Scar, smiling. "Torturing the two annoying cubs will make up for all the bother I have suffered because of them. This will be the best day of my life, Hago. If you never showed up I think I would have killed myself because of the misery."

"So you've been like this all along?" said Nala, addressing Scar. "I knew you were creepy but this is just... nasty."

"What did I tell you I would do if you spoke again?" said Hago threateningly.

Nala ignored him. "I can't believe you lied to us – lied to us *all* – about everything."

"It's hardly surprising," said Scar, examining his sharp claws. "If you paid attention you could figure it out easily. But that's where I succeed, you see. All of you are so stupid, after all. It was just *too* easy to fool you."

So Simba's Uncle had been planning stuff like this for a long while, at least ever since his brother was King. Nala had only seen Scar a few times, but she always thought there was something just plain *evil* about him. He always seemed to be so mysterious, like he was hiding a dark secret. He preferred to stick to the shadows, and Nala now knew why.

"So that's the plan," said Nala. "Kill me and Simba... then the King..."

"Precisely," Scar answered. "It's one of the best plans I've ever devised."

Hago cleared his throat loudly. "We. We've ever devised."

"Oh, you know what I meant," Scar said, waving him away with a paw.

"One of your best plans?" Nala exclaimed. "Just how many times have you tried to take over the Pride Lands?"

Scar put a paw to his chin and thought for a second. "Three hundred and sixty-two," he answered honestly.

Nala's eyes widened. It seemed he was quite the expert on evil plans...

"Okay, okay, enough of the chitchat," Hago interrupted, getting up. "I think it's time we put you in a more... suitable position."

Nala started to get worried again. What were they going to do to her this time?

"She's gotta be around here somewhere..." Simba said as he poked his head around a corner, peering into the Outlands.

He knew it was the Outlands as soon as he saw it. The land was barren, dusty, dying; all the trees seemed dead; the place looked very misty and the general atmosphere of the place shouted, "*Evil!*"

Yep, if someone was going to kidnap Nala, then this would be the place they would bring her. The perfect hideout. Why would anyone come looking around this creepy place? It's the kind of location you'd *want* to avoid.

Simba most certainly wasn't going to avoid it. He had a job to do. He had to save Nala and stop whatever Hago had planned for the kingdom. He wanted the Pride Lands for his own last time, and Simba had the sneaky suspicion that Hago wasn't one for giving up his lifelong dream.

The place did look empty though, and Simba thought that was kind of odd. Shouldn't it be crawling with hungry hyenas? He knew the Outlands were where they resided, so where were they? Simba wondered if maybe Hago had finished them off too...

Simba shook his head. He was getting too worked up, and he hadn't even started yet.

He started walking, beginning his journey through the Outlands and his search for Nala.

AN: Where will Simba's quest take him next? Can Scar and Hago stop? Will Nala live through this? All these questions and more will be revealed in the awesome conclusion tomorrow!

Chapter 7: Chapter 7: A Daring Rescue

AN: This chapter is pretty long. At least, by my standards. Well, you know what they say – the more the merrier!

Chapter Seven: A Daring Rescue

Hago violently threw Nala onto the ground in the middle of the empty clearing, causing her to cry out in pain.

"I've felt like doing that for a while now," Hago told Scar, wincing. "Hurt my back, though. I really have to get that fixed."

"So we just leave her here?" Scar presumed.

Hago nodded. "Yes. It's as simple as that." He pointed at a few large rocks near the area. "We just hide behind those rocks over there and wait for the Prince to show up. I can freeze them both with my staff, rendering them immobile, and then we can begin the... *torture*."

"I like the sound of that," said Scar, smiling evilly.

"You won't get away with this!" Nala shouted at them.

"Oh, shut up!" Hago snapped. "Seriously, why does everyone say the same thing? 'You won't get away with this', 'You evil fiend', 'Somebody please help me'! Always the same thing! Boring, boring, *boring*!"

Nala looked down at her paw. It was bleeding because of Hago throwing her onto the ground so hard. She had a feeling that was going to be the least of her worries if Simba didn't come to her rescue soon. She had faith in him, though, and knew that if she just waited, her best friend would come for her.

"Now you stay there," Hago warned. "Or you'll be sorry."

"I have a feeling I already am," Nala muttered.

Hago heard her, and lashed out with his staff, hitting Nala square in the face and knocking her back down again. She sobbed in pain. That really hurt...

"Insolent little brat," Hago said through clenched teeth, anger burning inside of him. He turned to Scar. "Come on. The sooner we get this done, the sooner I can kill these two cubs. *Slowly*."

"I agree," said Scar, not sparing the sobbing Nala a second glance. "I'll feel so much better without them around."

The two walked off to hide behind the rocks nearby. Nala sobbed and cried, curling up on the ground. She wiped a few tears from her eyes, careful to avoid the painful bruise on her face Hago had left her with.

Simba, she silently urged, *please come*.

Simba ducked behind a tree, thinking he heard something move. He peered out from the tree, and then realised that he was only hearing himself move.

He was getting too worried. He needed to stay calm. If he was scared now, then he wondered how he would feel when pitted against Hago and whoever else he was working with.

Simba hadn't had too much time to think up a plan of action, but he figured it was pretty simple – find Nala, stop Hago and escape. Easy.

Easier said than done, that is. Hago was a maniac with powers that seemed to have no limit. He was cold, cruel, calculating, and wasn't afraid to kill. Simba was one of the few cubs – or *lions* for that matter – who had faced him and lived to tell the tale. Simba took that as an advantage. He'd beaten Hago before, so wasn't it logical to think that it could be done again?

Simba hoped so.

He wandered away from the tree, heading deeper and deeper into the Outlands with each step he took. It seemed to get creepier, creepier *and* creepier as he ventured in further. Things were getting scarier by the second, and Simba hadn't even seen one hyena yet.

Simba hopped over a few large rocks that blocked his path, and his eyes lit up and he gasped in relief when he saw her.

Nala lay in the middle of a clearing, sobbing quietly to herself. She didn't look like she was at her best, that was for certain, but she was still alive. That was good, right? Of course it was!

Simba was about to run over to her, but then he reminded himself that Hago had taken her. He could be anywhere... hiding, ready to trap Simba forever. He couldn't let Hago get to him. Nala's life depended on it. He'd have to be careful, and sneaky. It was a good thing that's what he was best at...

Simba hopped back over the rocks, and decided to circle around the area until he was on the other side of it. Maybe he could rescue Nala from behind. Hago was most likely expecting Simba to come through the front way. However, Simba had other plans...

Scar thought he saw something moving out of the corner of his eye. He quickly turned his head to see nothing. Either he was only seeing things, or something had just moved. Scar suspected the latter, because he knew Simba would be stupid enough to try and rescue Nala.

"Did you see that?" Scar asked Hago, who was busy watching Nala sob and cry with great amusement.

Hago looked at Scar. "See what?"

"Obviously not, then," Scar concluded. "I saw something move over there," he told Hago, pointing at the spot where unbeknownst to him, Simba once was. Luckily for Simba, he had left just before Scar had seen him. It was a close call, that was for sure.

"Hmm..." said Hago thoughtfully. "I suspect the Prince might have arrived to claim his prize."

"Funny. I was just thinking the same thing," agreed Scar.

The two stared at each other, and smiled evilly. "I'll take the back, you take the front," Hago told Scar.

Scar nodded. "Absolutely."

"And make sure you don't kill him. Like you said – we want to make it as painful as possible for them."

"I can't wait," Scar admitted. The excitement and anticipation was building up inside of him. He was just itching to finally inflict his revenge on Simba and Nala. He found them both extremely irritating, if not the most irritating. Revenge would be sweet.

Simba poked his head up over another rock, and could now see Nala from behind. No one else seemed to be around, but Simba was still wary.

He decided he was going to try and get to Nala. He promised himself that he would do it slowly and carefully so no one would hear him. He didn't want Hago to catch him out so soon into his rescue mission.

Simba slowly made his way across the land, careful not to cause much noise as he walked along. But the more cautious he got, the more sound seemed to get amplified. Every step he took seemed louder than the last one. He was worrying again.

After what seemed like hours, Simba finally reached Nala. She hadn't heard Simba, and she was still crying lightly, miserable.

"Nala?" Simba called, whispering in her ear.

The crying stopped immediately. Nala couldn't believe her ears. She rolled over to see Simba, who couldn't help but smile when he saw her face.

"Simba...?" she said, not believing it for a second. Was this just all in her head? Was it just a dream? She couldn't be too sure. Maybe Hago had done something to her when he whacked her in the head with his staff.

"It's me, Nala," Simba assured her. "It's really me."

After a few seconds, Nala was sure it was really her best friend standing in front of her. "Oh, Simba!" she cried, leaping to her paws and hugging him tightly. "I knew you'd come!"

Simba hugged her back. "I had a feeling you'd be around here. What other creepy place would you take someone?"

"Yeah," Nala agreed, nodding. "I still can't believe you're here. I had this... feeling... that you would come and rescue me. I don't know why, though."

"I knew I *had* to," Simba told her. "I said I'd always take care of you, and that's what I'm doing."

His brown eyes and her green ones met for a moment in the darkness, and both of them felt their hearts skip a beat.

"Aw... how touching," said a voice from behind them.

Simba and Nala abruptly turned to be confronted with Scar and Hago, both of whom had sinister smiles on their faces, like they had been victorious over something...

"You didn't actually think you were all alone, did you?" continued Hago.

Scar chuckled. "I wouldn't put it past them. What do you expect from a pair of unintelligent cubs?"

Simba was pretty shocked. Just what was his Uncle Scar doing here? He couldn't possibly be in on Hago with him... Could he?

"Uncle Scar?" said Simba. "What are *you* doing here?"

Scar couldn't help but laugh. "Oh, this is going to be delightful!" he exclaimed. He composed himself and decided to tell Simba everything. It was about time he learned the shocking truth about what Scar had been secretly plotting for such a long time...

"Huh?" Simba didn't understand.

Scar chuckled. "You really are a foolish cub. Anyone with a brain cell could have figured out what I've been doing all this time. Now Simba... just *why* do you think I seem so... mysterious and 'weird', as you put it?"

Simba didn't answer. He was breathing heavily, beginning to understand now.

"I've been in league with the hyenas ever since your bothersome father became King, and I've been working ever since to kill him, you, and anyone else who gets in my way! For too long I have failed in my plans, but now that I have a little bit of help it looks like I'm finally close, and I am *not* going to let anyone like you wreck it!"

"So you lied?" concluded Simba, feeling quite betrayed. So one of his own family who he actually trusted was really an evil villain?

"Well done," Scar replied. "I knew even someone with *your* intelligence could figure it out soon enough."

"So what do you want from us?" Simba asked.

"They want to kill us both, Simba," Nala informed him. "They want to kill us, and then they want to kill your dad so they can take over the Pride Lands."

"Well, isn't she the smart one?" said Hago. "Yes, we are going to kill you. But it won't be a quick death, oh, no, no, no. That would be far too *nice*. We're going to make your deaths slow and agonising. You deserve it for the troubles you have put us here."

"The only people here who deserve a slow death are you two!" Simba accused, feeling courage he didn't even know he had building up from within him.

"How brave," remarked Scar sarcastically, frowning. "Not that bravery will get you anywhere now. It's far too late for that."

Scar and Hago began to advance towards the two cubs. Simba and Nala looked at each other. Simba could see the hopelessness in Nala's eyes. She thought they were dead. Deader than dead.

Simba looked at Scar and Hago. They both had menacing grins on their faces, thinking they had won.

Simba stepped bravely in front of Nala, and stared angrily at both Hago and Scar.

"Which one shall we take first?" Hago asked Scar.

"Well, I think it would be most entertaining to watch Simba see his best friend get tortured slowly to death, don't you?" answered Scar.

Hago laughed. "I like the sound of that."

And that's when Simba lost it. With an angry yell, he leapt on top of Hago and started hacking and slashing at him with all his might. Hago cried out as Simba tore into every part of his back. Hago knew his back was the weakest part of his body – it was the reason he hobbled about with the aid of his staff, and Simba was taking advantage of this.

"Scar, get him off me!" Hago ordered Scar.

Scar immediately tried to slash Simba and knock him off Hago, but Simba did a sneaky move, and jumped off of Hago, causing Scar to slash Hago instead. Hago cried out in pain.

"You little..." Hago said through clenched teeth, most parts of his body burning with pain. He hated scratches. Hated, hated, hated, *hated* them.

Simba bolted over to Nala and pulled her along. "Come on!" he exclaimed. "We've gotta get out of here before they get us!"

Nala quickly started running alongside Simba, trying to get away from the Outlands as fast as they could. She hoped Simba had bought them some time by injuring Hago. His back wasn't in perfect condition, and he wasn't suited to running at all.

"What are you waiting for?" screamed Hago at Scar. "Get after them!"

"*Me?*" Scar exclaimed. "*You* go catch the little brats! It's your fault they got away!"

"*My fault?*" Hago roared furiously. "It's your fault you couldn't see the little pipsqueak was going to attack me!"

"*How dare you insult me!*" Scar roared. "*I'm the boss here!*"

Hago laughed at Scar's statement. "No way! I think you'll find *I'm* the boss around here! You'd be nothing without me! Do you hear that, Scar? *Nothing!*"

"*We'll just see about that!*" Scar exclaimed as he pounced at Hago. Hago jumped at Scar and they started fighting barbarically with each other on the ground.

Simba and Nala were long gone, and looked as if Scar and Hago's partnership had come to a sudden end.

"Nala!" Sarafina cried upon seeing Simba return to the den with her daughter. "You're safe!"

Sarafina cradled Nala in her paws, who laughed. "Mom! Stop it! I'm fine!"

"Thanks to me," Simba declared with a grin, pointing to himself. "I knew I could find her."

Sarafina smiled at Simba. "Thank you," she told him, meaning every word of it. She really did.

"Well done, son."

Simba turned to see his father, smiling down at him. Simba smiled back, because he knew he had done the right thing.

The one thing he *didn't* expect from his father was an apology. "I'm sorry we didn't listen to you, Simba. You clearly seemed to know something we didn't, and if you didn't do something then I think it might have cost Nala her life."

Simba suddenly gasped, remembering the circumstances that surrounded Nala's kidnapping. "Dad!" he exclaimed. "There was someone helping the guy who took Nala."

"Who, Simba?" Mufasa asked, curious.

"Uncle Scar," Simba replied, a deadly serious look on his face.

Mufasa looked shocked. "Are you telling the truth, Simba?"

"Yes, Dad, I am!" Simba insisted. "Uncle Scar was in on it the whole time! He told me he's been trying to kill us for ages!"

He's been trying to take over the whole kingdom!"

"It's true," said Nala to Mufasa. "The two of them wanted to torture us before they killed us, and then they were gonna kill you. I don't think we would have escaped if it wasn't for Simba fighting them off."

Mufasa frowned. This was something he didn't quite expect. He knew his brother was quite a treacherous character, always preferring to hide in shadow rather than be seen, but he didn't think he was capable of such evil. Scar always seemed a little bit jealous of the fact that Mufasa was King, but apparently that jealousy was far more severe than Mufasa could have ever imagined.

"Mufasa, it's not true, is it?" Sarabi asked, overhearing the conversation.

Mufasa studied Simba and Nala's expressions, and decided they were telling the truth. They didn't have a reason to lie. "I'm afraid it would appear so," he told his mate.

"Well, what do we do?" Simba asked. "Go... hunt him or something?"

"We'll have to catch him," Mufasa decided. "I can't see Scar making much of a move tonight. Me and the rest of the pride will go after him in the morning, and his accomplice. He won't get away."

"That was really brave of you, you know," Nala told Simba as they sat on the edge of Pride Rock, watching the sunset together. "Fighting those two off."

Simba smiled at his best friend. "Thanks, Nala," he said. "I just... didn't want them to hurt you."

Nala smiled warmly. "That was really... caring of you, Simba."

Simba smiled cockily. "Well, I am a very caring person."

Nala pinned Simba down straight away, smiling down at him. "Not a very 'good at pinning' person, though."

"I will be someday," Simba declared. "Just you wait. I haven't forgotten that bet we have."

Nala rolled her eyes. "How could I forget? Pin me in less than a month or you'll kiss me."

"Yeah," Simba said. "And if you win you'll kiss *me*."

Nala smiled again, and collapsed on top of him. "Yeah," she said. "I have no problems with that." She smiled dreamily. "No problems at all..."

The End

AN: More foreshadowing? Of course. I'm very good at that. Wait about two more stories and I'll be able to take that to whole new heights. I'll see you soon with the next story in the series. Until next time, dear readers...

NEXT TIME: Hago's brother arrives, and Hago enlists his help to take over the Pride Lands. His dream-altering abilities may prove of some use...